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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 105140

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TAGS: CASC PTER ASEC PK

SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - PAKISTAN

¶1. This Travel Warning updates information on security incidents and reminds U.S. citizens of ongoing security concerns in Pakistan. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning dated August 7, 2008.

¶2. The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens against non-essential travel to Pakistan in light of the threat of terrorist activity.

¶3. The presence of Al-Qaida, Taliban elements and indigenous sectarian groups poses a potential danger to American citizens, especially in the western border regions. Continuing tensions in the Middle East also increase the possibility of violence against Westerners in Pakistan. Terrorists and their sympathizers have demonstrated their willingness and capability to attack targets where Americans are known to congregate or visit, such as hotels, clubs and restaurants, places of worship, schools, or outdoor recreation events. U.S. Government personnel are not permitted to stay at or frequent major hotels in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar. Government personnel also have been advised to restrict the number and frequency of trips to public markets, and to avoid public restaurants in Islamabad, Karachi, and Peshawar.

¶4. In September 2008 over fifty people, including three Americans, were killed and hundreds were injured when a suicide bomber set off a truck filled with explosives outside a major international hotel in Islamabad. In August 2008 gunmen stopped and shot at the vehicle of an American diplomat in Peshawar. In March 2008, a restaurant frequented by westerners in Islamabad was bombed, killing one patron and seriously injuring several others, including four American diplomats. On March 2, 2006, an American diplomat, a Consulate employee, and three others were killed when a suicide bomber detonated a

car packed with explosives alongside the U.S. Consulate General in Karachi. Fifty-two others were wounded.

¶15. Sectarian and extremist violence has resulted in fatal bomb attacks in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, Lahore, and other Pakistani cities in 2006, 2007 and 2008. Since 2007, over 1,000 bombings have killed more than 1,000 people throughout Pakistan and injured many more. Some of the attacks have occurred outside major hotels, in market areas and other locations frequented by Americans. Other recent targets have included restaurants, Pakistani government officials and buildings, and international NGOs.

¶16. Rallies, demonstrations, and processions occur regularly throughout Pakistan on very short notice. In the aftermath of the December 2007 death of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, widespread rioting in Karachi led to multiple deaths and injuries as well as widespread property damage. Demonstrations have often taken on an anti-American or anti-Western character, and Americans are urged to avoid large gatherings.

¶17. In 2007 and 2008, several American citizens throughout Pakistan were kidnapped for ransom or for personal reasons. Kidnappings for ransom are particularly common in some parts of Pakistan, such as the Northwest Frontier Province and Sindh Province.

¶18. U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Pakistan despite this Travel Warning are encouraged to register with the Embassy in Islamabad or the Consulates in Karachi, Lahore, or Peshawar. This registration can be completed online through the Department of State's travel

STATE 00105140 002 OF 002

registration website:

<https://travelregistration.state.gov>. Alternatively, Americans without Internet access should contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate for information on registering in person. Registration enables citizens to obtain updated information on travel and security within Pakistan via the emergency alert system (warden network).

¶19. Americans in country should take appropriate individual precautions to ensure their safety and security. These measures include maintaining good situational awareness, avoiding crowds and demonstrations and keeping a low profile. Americans should avoid setting patterns by varying times and routes for all required travel. Americans should ensure that their travel documents and visas are valid at all times. Official Americans are instructed to avoid use of public transportation and restrict their use of personal vehicles in response to security concerns.

¶10. The Pakistani military has been engaged in an active campaign against militants in the Bajaur district of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Access to many areas of Pakistan, including the FATA along the Afghan border, and the area adjacent to the Line of Control (LOC) in the disputed territory of Kashmir, is restricted by local government authorities for non-Pakistanis. Travel to any restricted region requires official permission by the Government of Pakistan. Failure to obtain such permission in advance can result in arrest and detention by Pakistani authorities. Due to security concerns, the U.S. Government currently allows only essential travel within the FATA by American officials.

¶11. The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad is located at Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5; telephone: (92-51) 208-0000; Consular Section telephone: (92-51) 208-2700; fax: (92-51) 282-2632; website: <http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/>.

¶12. The U.S. Consulate General in Karachi is located at 8 Abdullah Haroon Road; telephone: (92-21) 520-4200 or (92-21) 520-4400 after hours; fax: (92-21) 568-0496; website: <http://karachi.usconsulate.gov/>.

¶13. The U.S. Consulate in Lahore is located on 50 Sharah-E-Abdul Hamid Bin Badees (Old Empress Road), near Shimla Hill Rotary; tel: (92-42) 603-4000 or (91-92) 603-4250; fax: (92-42) 603-4200; website: <http://lahore.usconsulate.gov> ; email: amconsul@brain.net.pk.

¶14. The U.S. Consulate in Peshawar is located at 11 Hospital Road, Cantonment, Peshawar; telephone: (92-91) 526-8800; fax: (92-91) 528-4171; website: <http://Peshawar.usconsulate.gov>.

¶15. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov> where the Worldwide Caution and the Pakistan Country Specific Information and Travel Warning can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

¶16. Minimize considered.  
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